



12 July 2006

SAFETY ALERT: Two Soldiers Drown

1. Two of our Soldiers drowned over the Fourth of July holiday, one in a lake and the other in a swimming pool.

- The Soldier who drowned in the lake had been with a few friends on a pedal boat when he jumped into the water with all of his clothes on. The boat drifted away and he tried to swim to it, but he was too tired to do so. His friends jumped into the water to help but were unable to save him. Alcohol is believed to have been a factor in this tragedy.

- The Soldier who drowned in the pool was an acknowledged nonswimmer. He had been enjoying the pool with his family and friends, but at one point became separated from them. He was later found unconscious in the pool. Although pool employees administered CPR with help from his fellow Soldiers, he was later pronounced dead at a local hospital.

2. These tragedies highlight the dangers associated with swimming and other water sports. Although they offer a great opportunity to escape from the summer heat, water sports can be deadly. Our children are especially at risk. In the United States, drowning is the biggest accidental injury-related cause of death among children ages 1 through 4 and the second biggest killer of children ages 14 and under.

3. To help prevent more tragic deaths this summer, I encourage everyone to view the film *Reasons People Drown*. This film is available for loan from garrison safety offices and provides valuable information on water safety. In addition, I ask you to keep the following in mind:

- European swimming facilities differ from those in the United States in many ways. Most of them do not have lifeguards as we know them; instead, they have personnel who perform maintenance and monitor the overall behavior of their guests. Although these personnel will attempt to save someone who is drowning, they do not continuously monitor swimmers. For this reason, parents and friends must closely supervise young children and nonswimmers at all times.

- Alcohol and water sports do not mix. USAREUR has lost 37 Soldiers since 1980 to drownings, and alcohol use was cited as a contributing factor in most of these incidents. Alcohol can distort your judgment and affect your balance, coordination, and ability to swim. Alcohol can also reduce your ability to stay warm, which increases the risk of hypothermia.

- Young children are usually fascinated by water and can quickly get themselves in trouble if they are not supervised. Parents can help keep their children safe by carefully watching them when they are around water and ensuring access to a telephone is readily available to call for help if needed. In addition, no one should ever leave a body of water—including wading pools—accessible to children without supervision.

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4. Soldiers: I ask you to look after one another. Your fellow Soldiers depend on you. Do not do anything foolish. Taking unnecessary risks not only jeopardizes your life, it jeopardizes the lives of your family members and battle buddies.

5. Leaders: Talk to your Soldiers and ensure they read this message. Also continue Under the Oak Tree counseling with those you supervise. This verbal dialog is critical to preventing the loss of the Army's most precious asset—its Soldiers.

6. *No Loss of Life* remains our goal. We can reach that goal through personal involvement with and genuine concern for one another. Have a wonderful and—above all—safe summer!



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